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EGGJUM-STENENS INDSKRIFT MED DE ÆLDRE RUNER.
Udgiven for Det norske historiske Kildeskriftfond ved Magnus Olson.
Christiania, 1919. Pp. 125.

The most important runological find that has been unearthed in recent years in the Scandinavian North is undoubtedly the remarkable inscription of the Eggjum-stone discovered in Sogndal, Western Norway, in June, 1917. Already the fact of its length, with its 200 runes, gives it a significant place among monuments of like character; for it becomes thereby the longest inscription in the older runic series. Upon archeological evidence, especially the type of grave it was found in, Haakon Schetelig (Bergen Museum) has dated the stone back to the 7th century; this is in general supported by philological evidence from its various sides, although Magnus Olson's dating is 700 not the 7th century. The very great importance of the inscription, lies partly on the side of ON. linguistic history, partly in the information it gives us regarding the development of the older runes in a period which is represented by very few inscriptions, but still more in its religious and mythological contents, and in its literary form. And here the information that it reveals, after the 1200 years of silence, seems to be so far-reaching as to raise it at once to the position of a document of the first importance for Old Norse literary history and for pagan religion in the pre-Viking period in the North.

The stone was found on the farm Eggjum by the owner of the farm and his son on June 5, 1917; it lay in horizontal position the depth of a plow-furrow. Upon being dug out it was found to contain an inscription on the under side. The stone was then handled with the greatest care by the farmer and his son; it was laid aside with the inscription down, word of the find was dispatched to the nearest museum (Amble, Sogn) and the stone was guarded against harm until it could be given expert examination. Of the grave, the position of the stone, objects found in the grave, and all external conditions surrounding the find, Olson gives a full account, then, on pages 6-10 of the present work, quoting mainly Haakon Schetelig, who conducted the archeological examination in June and September, 1917. Among the objects found may be especially noted a flint flake. Tools of stone have often been taken out of Bronze-Age and Iron-Age graves; they have usually been regarded as having come there by accident; i.e., as not a part of the origin grave deposit. However, in this case the flake was employed, as the investigation makes probable, in the cutting of the inscription; its use instead of iron, the natural thing to use at 700 A.D., has a religious significance, and is intimately bound up with the burial ritual of the period in question.¹ Of this I shall speak again below.

The grave is that of a man as shown by the fire-steel found in the grave; it is the grave of a member of one of the chief families of the community as the name (conveyed in complex kennings) reveals, pages 73-88 of the investigation; the connection of this family with other chief families in Western Norway is also pointed out by the author; the one buried died a violent death, the central

¹ Hence in some of the earlier cases of flint-finds in late graves the interpretation of these as accidental may need renewed investigation; they may have a definite meaning.

point of the inscription is a curse upon the slayer, and the purpose of the inscription is to bring death to him (p. 90); the preparations for the burial, the ritual preceding and accompanying it is revealed; part of the inscription is in verse, a pagan poem with a magic burial ritual as its contents. We observe the care with which in the minutest detail the rites have been carried out, where and how and by what instrument the runes have been engraved, the manner of the conveying of the stone to the grave, what kind of men are selected to convey and place the stone, etc. The runes were not read by any man nor viewed by any living man; the stone was consigned to the secrets of the grave with its magic runes turned toward the face of the dead; they were cut into the stone at a spot, that was hidden from the light of the sun (by night then? or in the darkest depths of some near-by forest?); the runes were cut by the venerable flint, they were cut in magic number groups divisible by the magic groups of the divinely descended runic letter series (of the futhark); and they were cut according to the rules of runic magic myth-lore; the magic is visualized by the curse-carrying steed; the rune-stone was conveyed to the grave on a rune-inscribed sleigh with the stone so placed that the sleigh's runes were "scraped off" and so sent out into the wide world (here p. 61 and especially p. 90);² and the stone was laid neither by men who possessed the sharp eye of magic, nor by those who could be affected by the power of the magic runes themselves (p. 39).

Of course the offered interpretation depends, for its acceptance among scholars, upon the correctness or the strength of the probability of the reading of the runes themselves. And it must be said at once that here one meets with a number of difficulties. Of the 200 runes no less than 40 are wholly or in large part illegible, i.e., the upper or lower end may be all that is left. I hasten to say also, however, that the author builds up his really wonderful structure of interpretation on the basis largely of the remaining 160 certain or strongly probable readings. Most uncertain are runes A50-55, A74-76, A95-101 and B2-4. The most difficult part of the inscription is, therefore, that part of A which seems to (may) contain the name of the buried man and the mention of the avenging son. The connection with elements in *Völuspá* and *Grimnismál* (*NiðhQgg*) cannot be regarded as wholly established, though Olson makes out a strong case for such an interpretation (pp. 82-89).

I do not either feel wholly convinced of the reading of the short line B. There are 11 runes, of which only 5 are certain—reading from left to right. So at any rate from the apparently excellent reproduction (p. 11, see also p. 15). The reading MISURKI that is *misyrki* is interpreted by Olson to be a

*Sigrdrifa's Lay may be translated:

All were shaved off
As were cut on,
Hurled with the holy mead
And sent wide on the ways.
They are 'mong the asas,
They are 'mong the elves,
Some with the wise wanes;
Some men in mankind have.

name-tabu for "wolf," i.e., avenger, this on the analogy of Eddic usage of the word *ULFR*. But if the runemaster would desire to say that an avenger is born who shall avenge the slaying would he have been likely to choose a kenning with the meaning evil-doer, doer of misdeeds, since the revenge he is to carry out is, from the point of view of the inscriber, certainly a good and righteous deed? Would one not in that case have to assume something like a stereotyped use of the word in the sense of "wolf"? But that we certainly cannot assume. We should expect the inscriber of the runes in this case to use some word meaning "destroyer." I am, in fact, inclined to believe that the word *ulfr* in ON., besides its usual meaning of "wolf," has especially in poetic language also a more or less stereotyped use in the sense of 'foe, avenging foe.' See, e.g., the various meanings under 3 (qui vastat, corrumpit, raptor) in Egilssons *Lexicon Poetarum antiquae linguae septentrionalis*. I may be permitted also, perhaps, to call attention to the fact that the Eddic usage cited by Olson (*Sigrdrifumál*, 34, and *Sigurðkviða en skamma*, 12,³ do not seem to exhibit the specific meaning of 'destroyer' or 'avenger,' but is in both cases used of the son of a foe, a son, who, if left alive, may become an avenging "wolf." But even if the word in poetic useage could also be employed in the specific sense of 'avenger,' I find it difficult to conceive of this use of *misyrki* in the situation we have in the case of the Eggjum ritual-inscription.

Professor Olson draws an interesting picture of what he believes to be the connection between the author of the Eggjum inscription and the scald Egil Skallagrímsson, who also was a master in runic art as well as in that of poetry. Of the former he says: "I rig og mangleget Runekunst overgaes hans Indrindning bare af Rök-Indskriften" (p. 104). And of Egil: "I Egil's Person forenes sublim Digtekunst med rigt udarbejdet Runekunst, og ganske naturlig maatte den af Aserne, som Egil folte sig mest dragen mod, blive Odin, den personificerede Intelligens med Fremtrædelsesform i Seid og Galder, men ogsaa i Aandens ypperste Frembringelser, Skaldskap og Runeidræt." (p. 105). He then points out that the runemaster of the Eggjum-stone belonged to a central West Norwegian Fjord settlement, within that part of the country whence Iceland received most of its original settlers, and whence it took its social organization and its religious worship: "og hvorfra det ogsaa sandsynlig har taget med baade Edda kvad og Sans for Skaldskab. Der synes at gaa en ubrudt Linje fra Eggjum i Sogn over Borg til Reykjaholt paa Island. Snorra Edda's Forfatter, som hadde sin Valholl paa Altinget, og Snorre's Stamfader Egil Skallagrímsson, Odin's Ven, turde have ført videre traditioner, som skal knyttes til de norske Landskaber Fjordene (herfra nedstammede Egil) og Sogn, hvor vi har de eneste vestlandske Eksempler paa Stedsnavne, sammensatte med Gudenavne Odin (p. 106)."

The linguistic importance of the inscription and its contributions to runic history are dealt with on pp. 109-117. On the basis of the runic forms especially he dates the stone ca. 700 (pp. 117-121). Finally the significance of the inscription for the history of the earliest ON. poetry, especially the Eddic lays is discussed. It is shown, e.g., that the linguistic changes which led from Primi-

³ Numbering according to F. Jónsson's *Sæmundar-Edda*. Reykjavík, 1905.

tive Scandinavian to Old Norse were in the main complete by the year 700. But for a generation past it has been held that these changes belong to the 9th century, and with that regarded as proved, the doctrine has likewise established itself that: none of the Eddic lays can be older than the 9th century. But in recent years the untenability of so late a dating has come again to be felt. And now, in the light also of the Eggjum inscription, the doctrine falls to the ground; further deductions by the author on the age of Eddic lays, Odin-worship, magic lore, mythology, metre, etc. follow, pp. 122-124. The verses of the Eggjum-stone represent a special type of poetry belonging to the pagan burial-ritual and its runic magic; there are no parallels of it in ON. literature, nor within the information we get regarding Old Germanic prehistoric poetry in general. It has metrical form, but a more artless one than the Old Germanic recitative poetry; it has no fixed rules of alliteration, nor as yet the fixed strophic form of ON. poetry. Thus the inscription bridges over, in a way, this formal difference between the early poetry of the North with that of the West Germanic world.

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